



"I believe these experiences are the essential warp and woof of a new spiritual garment which is to be woven for the modern world."

A Cottage in Hampshire

True Ghost Stories-II

By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Illustrated by W.T. Benda

ALADY, the widow of an officer, who inhabited a large cottage in the north of Hampshire, was so

plagued by incessant noises in the house, that she seriously thought of leaving it, although she leased it upon very advantageous terms.

Her mother wrote and asked me to help in the matter, and informed me that her daughter was highly psychic, that she possessed the power of automatic writing, and that this writing assured her that the disturbing force was the spirit of a man named Mason, that he had left a paper in a cupboard in a certain room, and that he was much troubled in mind because this paper had not been destroyed.

No such cupboard was known to the lady, but on examining the room and removing a heavy article of furniture (the cottage had been taken furnished) a door was actually found, and a long box-room cupboard disclosed, which extended the whole length of the wall.

I went down in the hope of being of some assistance, and I found that by the time I had arrived, a good part of the plaster in the partition wall between the bedroom and the box-room had been loosened, but nothing had been found. The credibility of the spirit had been increased, however, by the fact that in the automatic writing he had given the name of a previous tenant of the house, some fifty years before, which proved, on inquiry, to be correct.

I MADE a very thorough search, from which I emerged absolutely covered with dust and plaster. I was unable to find any hidden paper, but it was clear to me that some bell wires had been taken through that way in the past, and that if there had been a paper it would probably have been seen at that time. I asked the ladies to join me, therefore, in a table *séance*, each one of us placing the tips of our fingers very lightly upon the surface of the table.

Movements soon followed, and in response to my question the name "Mason" was spelled out. I asked him if he were satisfied that we had done all we could to meet his wishes.

He answered "Yes."

I then asked him if he was convinced that the papers were really gone. He again agreed.

I then took it upon myself to point out to him that he had been acting very selfishly for some years, that in his anxiety over his own papers he had caused great unhappiness to people who lived in the house and had never wronged him, that so long as he worried himself about earthly affairs he would remain earthbound, and that he would be far better employed if he turned his thoughts to higher things and endeavored to progress in his new surroundings.

I then asked him whether, if he prayed for him, it would assist him onwards, to which he vigorously

assented; so we promised to pray every day if he in his turn would promise to give no further trouble. Upon his agreeing to this, which he did by spelling out the two letters D and V, we brought the matter to an end. That was in May, and I have had two letters since, in which the lady assures me that the conditions in the house are entirely changed, and that for the time, at least, all trouble is over.

"Mason has kept his word," she says, "as all hauntings have ceased and there is a strong feeling of restfulness and peace in the house which it is impossible to describe."

I BELIEVE that all these varied experiences have been sent to us, not to amuse us by tales to be told and then forgotten, but as the essential warp and woof of a new spiritual garment which is to be woven for the modern world.

We live in an age which has long demanded a sign; yet when the sign was sent it was blind to it. I can not understand the frame of mind of those who view proofs of survival which appear in the Bible as of most vital importance, and yet close their mind to the same things when they reappear before our very eyes. I believe most of the evidence in the sacred books, where it is not perverted by mistranslation, interpolation, or forgery, to be perfectly good evidence; but no honest mind could say that judged by human standards of credibility it could, for an instant, compare in its demonstration of the fate which awaits the soul, with the psychic revelations of recent years. In the latter case, the witnesses are thousands in number, are men of the highest credibility, and have placed in many cases their personal experience upon record, so that any objection can be lodged.

Modern Britain does not disprove, but confirms ancient Judea. We are a more scientific age, however, and we wish to know the how and the why. Such inquiries are no longer, with so great a wealth of material, beyond the scope of our brains.

In a previous article I have endeavored to indicate two well-marked laws—the one that it is the effluvia of the human organism which furnishes the basis of physical manifestations from the unseen, the other that there is a strict limitation of psychic power, which does not prevent noise and subsequent disturbance, but does stand in the way of destructive or personal violence.

THIS power of producing noise and commotion may, it is true, cause such great misery to those who endure it, that it may amount to mental torture.

There is the well-known case of Miss Clavion, the famous French actress, who refused the advances of a

young Breton suitor. The man died two years later, with manacles against Miss Clavion upon his lips. He was as good as his word, and proved the wisdom of her rejection by the unmanly

persecution to which he subjected her after his death. This took the form of loud cries, which frequently broke out when she was in the company of others, and were so terrible that some of the hearers fainted. In the later stages of her persecution these cries gave place to the sound of a musket going off, which occurred once a day through a particular window of her house.

On ninety days running this phenomenon occurred, and was most fully investigated, as the cries had also been, by the Parisian police, who placed spies in the street and sought constantly but in vain for any normal explanation. Finally, after two years, the persecution stopped, the time having been foretold by the dead man, who declared that he would upset her life for the same period as she had upset his. He had certainly done so, but like all revenge, it was probably a two-edged knife which cut him more deeply than his victim.

A MORE justifiable persecution, but one which also amounted to torture, is detailed by Mrs. Carter Hall, the authoress, as having come within her personal observation in her youth.

In this case, a young officer had inflicted the greatest of all injuries upon a beautiful young woman, who afterward died. The resulting persecution may have come not from her gentle spirit, but from that of someone who loved her, and desired to avenge her; but it was of the most atrocious character. Particulars will be found in Mr. Dale Owen's "Footfalls"—a book so accurate in its cases and so wise in its deductions, that it should be a classic upon this subject. The unfortunate officer was attended wherever he went by such noises and disturbances that at last no landlady would let rooms to him, and he was hunted from house to house, a miserable and despairing man, alternately praying for relief and cursing at his unseen enemy. No dog would stay with him, and even his relatives were scared at his company, so that he had to leave his home for fear of driving his mother and sister into an asylum.

"It is hard to be so punished," the young officer said to Mrs. Carter Hall, "but perhaps I have deserved it."

Possibly this admission may have proved to be the dawn of better days.

I hope that in some future articles I may be able to outline some of the laws which govern these matters and to illustrate them by examples which show their workings and their limitations.

Can we check up on revolutions from the Other World? Read what Sir A. Conan Doyle writes of "A New Light on Old Crimes"—in a soon-to-come number of *Heart's*

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